



## CHRISTMAS JOYS

BY E. K. MCKINSTRICH.

Draw up the chair about the logs  
That sparkle bright and gay;  
That in quaint fashions on the wall  
In mid-air float and play.  
Oh, toss all sorrow to the winds,  
For this is Christmas day.

What if the chilly winds without  
About the chimney blow  
And high against the frosted panes  
Make minarets of snow?  
When Christmas cheer this cozy nest  
With comfort sets aglow!

The happy child upon the floor,  
With feelings festive ripe  
Plays with the red toy animal  
Of curious spot or stripe  
While deep within his little heart  
The birds of springtime pipe.  
He roams beneath his loaded tree  
Beside the log-cabin,  
Alive with candles, blocks and drums



And many a picture book  
From dear old Santa Claus, who came  
Last night-but hush—oh, look!

Here comes the plump and luscious goose  
So savory and brown,  
A golden promise on a dish,  
Our ears and hearts to drown,  
And place us near the plumpest brow  
A rich though fleeting crown.

Come, let us carve him while he's hot  
And breathing fumes of spice,  
And pile the pungent stuffing high  
Upon each juicy slice,  
And in dream shadows lightly drift  
Through flowery paradise.

And afterward we'll light our pipes  
While twilight shades appear,  
And when we break the apple-blossom trail,  
And the blushing cheer,  
Let him who wins wish for us all  
A happy, glad New Year.

## A CHRISTMAS QUEEN.

BY MARTHA M'CALLACH WILLIAMS.

[Copyright, 1894, by the Author.]  
Aunt Charlotte came sturdily across the Lee plantation. The fields were all sere, as became mid-December. Yet in the flower garden roses, pansies and chrysanthemums were rapidly unfolding in the warm, slow rain, rather ragged and discolored, to be sure, but flowers for all that.

"Dem's de vely tings fer dressin up de table," Aunt Charlotte muttered to herself as she scolded between the borders and on to the back porch. Before she could knock, the hall door opened, and Mrs. Lee called out:

"Howdy, Aunt Charlotte? Come right in my room to the fire. You'll catch your death, yet, running about so in bad weather. Sit down and dry your feet while you tell me all the news."

Aunt Charlotte struck her torn, muddy shoes toward the blazing logs, fetched a sort of groaning sigh and said: "La, Miss Ma'y, you know I never hears no news, but dey norcated it at church meeting 'steady dat ole lady Brantley was metty low wid de brown-skeeters, an ole Miss Calshaw's Florence had done runned off an married dat Dadd boy."

"Well, well, she has driven her ducks to a bad market. Girls are so foolish. Oh, did you hear from old Mr. Pegram? I am told he was badly hurt last week."

"Yessum, he clumb up de stable loft, huntin for de hosses, jug er hoker, an fell through on dat young mule, an de critter kicked him. So de doctor say de spine er he back is querralized."

"Dear me! You don't say so!" Mrs. Lee returned.  
For an hour the talk slipped along the channels of local gossip. Aunt Charlotte knew there was nothing like tidbits of news to put Miss Ma'y in good humor. Whatever happened in ten miles around was reported, with enlargement and variations, at the colored church. Besides Aunt Charlotte herself was outdoor landlady for some half dozen families, so of course knew all about them. When her feet were dry, she got up, picked her sunbonnet from the floor and said, balancing herself on one foot:

"Well, I mus' be goin. Miss Ma'y, is you got any gule paper?"  
"Let me see. Yes, I think—I know I have. Do you want some? Are you going to have another Christmas tree at de church?"

"Yessum—no'm. I does wants some, but 'tain't fer no Christmas tree. Dey done had so many er dem, an fesservuls, an May sumpers, an so on, de folks is tired on 'em. Miss Pasco, de teacher at de free school, is metty high lant. He been one session ter de Frisk university, up bat Nashville, so de church call on him ter pervent um somp'n new. An he tole um dey mus' have er queen er Christmas."

"Indeed? That is something new. Tell me all about it."  
"I ain't exactly got de whole thing

straight yit, but fur es I kin make out my Meely—day choosed her fer queen—is gwine be dressed up in white, wid er crown on, an red shoes, an set up on er cheer on top de teacher's table, wid er big stripe-d shawl all hangin down ter de do, an de schoolchilluns is ter come up 'fore her an say dey speeches—'bout de boy stood on de burnin deck, an twinkle, twinkle, little stars, an de reaper whose name is death, an all dem yothers. Den dey gwine have de logs fer de big chilluns, an arter dat all de young men will march an sing around her, an she ha' ter choose one on 'em fer king. Dat's what gits Meely what de wool's short. You know she ain't forward lek de yother gals."

"No, Meely's a good girl—the best I know. Is that all?"  
"Oh, no'm. Dey gwine have er supper, sot in de schoolhouse eend er de church. Dat'll be 50 cents an eat all you wants er barboone an pie. De church don't git none er dat; hit all goes ter dem wha' vides de vittels. Bat de side table whar dey gwine sell cake an candy an reasons an oranges an seegars will be all fer de pascience sal'ry."

"Sides dat he git de dime at de do' too. De church owes him \$40, an day had ter promiss ter git up somp'n wold make it fer him Christmas, 'fore he'd 'gree ter baptize any er dem las' convars. He 'lowed, his body was des as well worth savin as dey souls, an he wasn't gwine ruin his las' suit er clothes in de water 'bout he had de insurance er gittin money ter buy no'."

"I see. Does it come off Christmas eve?"  
"Oh, no'm. Hit's gwine be Saddy night in Christmas. De yother churches an school 'tainments will be through by den, so we git er big crowd. De society from town—de Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise, say dey comin out ter see how us country niggers does, an I wants ter 'stonish um good one time sho."

"You want me to help you?"  
"Yessum, I be metty proud er you will. I got three dozen eggs. Ef you des let me have de sugar an butter an flour, I'll make two cakes fer de side table an bake um in your big rosepan. An I thought maybe you'd len me de money ter git Meely's dress an shoes, an make de crown fer her, an len me you bungy blanket ter go over de cheer. Ef you will, hit'll be er mighty big 'commendation."

"Has Meely outgrown de white dress I made her last summer?"  
"No'm, but hit's been washed. 'Sides hit anver was nothin but swiss muslin. Now she got ter have tartan. Teacher say queens don't niver w'ar nothin else, an natter puts one on dey back but des de one time. Hit's boun ter be right now."

"You had better get her yellow shoes. She can wear them afterward."

"Teacher say dey mus' be red—dat's what de town niggers will be spectin, an dey shan't have no scuse ter laugh ef I can help it."

"You want me to make the dress?"  
"Yessum, ef you will."

"And the crown?"  
"Ain't nobody but you would do it fer me."

"Do you want it like this?" showing a picture of a royal diadem.  
"No'm," said Aunt Charlotte. "De chilluns is gwine w'ar silver ones when dey say dey speeches an Miss Pasco he made um one fer er pattern. Hit's des er ban big 'nough to go on de head, wid shan p'ints stannin up around ter. Meely's mus' be dat way, too, only gule an bigger."

"H-m-m! Is that all you want?"  
"Yessum—captin 'tis dem flowers out yonder in de garden. An I'll sweep de yard, an make you soap in de spring-time, an iron all Miss Lucy's nice clothes next summer."

"I know you will, you blessed Aunt Charlotte," said Miss Lucy Lee, running in with her arms full of finery. "And Meely shall be as fine as Friday in this tartan dress of mine—I've only worn it once—and a red sash and stock-

ings as well as the shoes. And her crown shall have 17 tiny sharp points to it, one for each year of her life and mine. You know we were born de same day, and have grown up just de same size."

Aunt Charlotte beamed all over.  
"God love you, Miss Lucy! You is one good child. I was thinkin 'bout dat dress all de way over here—studyin up how I could git it. If your toots des want's so little dat Meely couldn't git mo' her big toe in your shoes, I'd ax you fer dem white slippers and let de red stockin's do."

"Oh, she shall have shoes—never fear!" Lucy said, holding the sash to the light. "But how will she get to church without spoiling them? It's a mile from your house, and the wind will be knee deep. You know it always rains a week when the wind is in the south."

"Yessum, hit's gwine be bad. Dey done 'cided at church meetin dat Meely mus' dress in de clothes' house dar an den come out, an besot up in er no top bungy, an have eight er de big boys pull her up ter de church do'. Den Miss Pasco, he gwine take her outen hit an tote her up de aisle an set her in de cheer on de table."

Lucy laughed aloud. Her mother frowned and said, a trifle sharply:  
"I would not allow that, Charlotte. Meely is no child."

Aunt Charlotte looked at the floor in meek obstinacy.  
"Dey tells me queens don't walk none 'tall," she said, "an de buggy can't git no higher 'an de do'."

"Then let two of de big girls make a bee saddle and tote her. That won't look half so bad as de Pasco lugging her like an old cat does her kitten," Mrs. Lee said, still sharply.

"It's de hugging, not de lugging, ma objects to," Lucy said through her laughing, "but that does not matter. I believe Mr. Pasco wants to marry Meely."

"He do," said Meely's mother, "but she done sot her min on dat ar' owdacious Pete Meachum, who've got no 'ligion 'tall, is des always whistlin reels an potifions an singin 'bout

Lucy's eyes flashed, but before she could speak her mother said:  
"Well, I hope you'll succeed, but it does seem to me that when a girl sets her heart on a trifling, no account fellow there is no use trying to change it. I didn't know Meely was like the rest, but I'll help you all I can."

"So will I," said Lucy, running away, with scarlet cheeks. Meely's case was her own. Bert Wilmer had her heart and her truth plighted; rich Dave Allen, the bucking of her parents. Possibly it was this fellow feeling that made her so wondrous kind to Meely. Possibly also the fact that Pete had been postman for the lovers ever since Bert was forbidden the Lee house had something to do with the case.

Then, too, the Lees were a habitual providence to the poor blacks about them. Love for the merry, careless, simple-hearted race was in their blood, comprehension likewise. They saw under the grotesque extravagance of the "queen of Christmas" a germ of self reliance and furthered it accordingly.

When at last it came to pass, Lucy, with her brother and a dozen more young folks stood outside and looked on through the window back of the pulpit. The church was a big log structure, lit with kerosene lamps in flaring tin reflectors, and fairly crammed with dark humanity.

Besides the country negroes for miles around the Sons and Daughters of I Will Arise were out in full regalia, a hundred strong. Each brother wore a red sash crossing his breast, with a tin star over the heart, a green apron turned up with yellow, and a blue and white rosette upon the left lapel. Each sister was gorgeous in a purple cape, a long white, freely ruffled apron, deep red sash about the waist and orange turban with green plumes. They marched to their allotted places, droning out a weird, wordless chant, and vainly tried to maintain an attitude of solemn criticism. The crowd was dotted with smiling familiar faces, the savory scent of barbecue was in the air, and Brudder Paschare, otherwise the Rev. Mr. Barker, shook hands up and down the benches with a fervor that almost set them shouting.

Presently the deacons hustled and squeezed the crowd back from the aisle, and Mr. Pasco came through with Meely in his arms. She was a slim slip of a girl, but he staggered under her weight and would have fallen when mounting to her chair throne if Pete Meachum had not sprung forward and relieved him of his burden.

"Unph! My Lord! I wouldn't have dat nigger fer soap grease ef he can't tote no better 'n dat!" exclaimed the foremost Daughter of I Will Arise, while one of the country lads murmured: "Lordy! Wouldn't I des lok ter see 'im put 'ginst Pete at er log rollin! He done stay dar in dat school 'ouse twell he ain't no stronger 'n er skeeter."

Meely reached her throne about equally crumpled in clothes and feelings. While the speeches and dialogues went on she sat trembling and half blind,



only kept from running ineffectually away by the knowledge that her mother's eye was on her. She knew what was expected of her—that she would choose Mr. Pasco as king—and she hated him so! If only she might choose Pete! But he would not be in the line. Aunt Charlotte had managed to have him left out. After he put her in the chair he sat down on the pulpit floor back of it,

SENT HIM SPRAWLING TO THE FLOOR.  
where the drapery hid him from the crowd, but let him look his fill at her. That was her only consolation. If they tried to make her bodily over to Mr. Pasco, he was close at hand, and Miss Lucy and Marse Bert looking in at the window, ready to give him countenance for her protection.

At last the march began. Two by two, a man and woman, they came into the small clear space before her and moved around singing:  
My Lord called Marse Marthy,  
Sister Marthy would not answer,  
Sister Marthy's into de garden,  
Talkin' about my Lord.

Five minutes of slow, heavy stamping; then came a wild whirl to the war ban's of music,  
Dar war ban's of music,  
Dar war ban's of music,  
Rumbilin fro' de sky.

Then the words died away to a wild groaning shriek, with a tempest of footfalls under it. The marchers formed a wheel with the women in the center and whirled at top speed in front of and up to the poor distracted queen. The pastor came, too, with an oily smile, and put his buggy whip in her hand, saying: "Now, Miss Pomeleely, hit your king and lemme set him down up yere side you. Hit is not good fer 'oomas ter be erlone, de Scripture says. Now, shot your eyes an hit de nex' whio'er passes." With that he seemed to release the whip, yet adroitly flung the lash around Pasco's neck. Instantly there went up a great laughing shout, and by the time Meely had drawn one sobbing breath the teacher was beside her, holding her hand. The preacher had drawn a book and a folded paper from his pocket and was beginning to read that the document authorized him to solemnize matrimony betwixt Cesar Augustus Pasco and Pamela Mills.

Out from the wonder-stricken crowd came a shrill cry: "O-o-o! you vilyn! I hain't dead yet!"  
The next minute a small and vicious looking daughter of I Will Arise streamed up to the throne, clutched the royal bridegroom and shaking him till his teeth chattered cried out: "I married dis yere slab sided, low down, no count triffin fly up de creek two years ago, up to Nashville, an took in washin ter spote 'im so he might go ter school an git book sense enough ter be er preacher. An dis is what I gits fer it. Fine um yere tryin ter marry er gal 'at don't ant um an does 'ant some-body else. I been knowin ever sence he runned away he was mean as gar bover thickened wid tadpoles, but I never did thought he'd come quite ter sech er pass as dis."

Mr. Barker put on his most judicial aspect. Pasco's countenance betrayed his guilt. Nevertheless the minister asked:  
"Is this woman your wife, Brother Pasco?"  
"I married her once, but I was a

minor then, and I propose to get me a divorce next spring—as soon, in fact, as school is out," Mr. Pasco said, calling all his grammar to his aid.  
"Den you better wait till you git it 'fore you try ter marry agin," Pete Meachum said, catching his rival round the waist and sending him sprawling on the floor. Then he gathered the sobbing Meely in his arms and turned to face the preacher, saying: "Mr. Paschare, my boss as got license fer me ter marry dis same little gal. Git um from him, please, an tie de knot right yere. I was gwine steal her as we went home, but I don't want no mo' risks er losin'er."

Then a wonderful thing happened. The party outside came in and stood in a half circle, back of Pete and Meely, until they were made one, when a grave gentleman, whom nobody quite knew, stepped in front of Bert Wilmer and Lucy Lee, and in less time than it takes to write it they had likewise entered the holy estate of matrimony. Pete and his boss, it seemed, had planned a double runaway. The happenings of the evening only precipitated the crisis.

Aunt Charlotte and Mrs. Lee in time became reconciled to their sons-in-law, but the church meeting has never yet ventured upon another queen of Christmas.

THE GAME OF SNAPDRAGON.  
Players Must Be Quick and Not Mind Burned Fingers.  
Few "Christmas gambols" exist in their original form. But the old games modified to suit modern taste as well as the new ones are just as full of fun and are entered into by the young folks nowadays with as much zest as were the rougher gambols over which in old England the "Lord of Misrule" presided. Although the authority of this lord was generally acknowledged at Christmas merrymakings 200 or 300 years ago, and he made things very lively, such disorders finally crept into his brief burlesque reign that he was suppressed.

One of the most quiet and genial of the gambols over which he was master has been handed down under the name of "Snapdragon." Raisins are put into a large bowl, covered with spirit, which is ignited. Lights in the room are extinguished, and each one attempts in turn to grasp a raisin, a feat requiring some skill and courage. Meanwhile an appropriate accompaniment is the "Song of the Snapdragon," beginning thus:

Here he comes with flaming bowl,  
Don't be mean to take his toll!  
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

Take care you don't take too much,  
Be not greedy in your clutch,  
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

With his blue and lapping tongue  
Many of you will be stung,  
Snap! Snap! Dragon!

A Bit of Pathos at Christmastide.  
There is a little girl of 6 who has proved herself one of the ministering children not in name only. A few weeks ago the baby of the family died. The children as well as the mother had looked forward to hanging up the baby's stocking at Christmas with a great deal of pleasure. But the loss of the baby brought such anguish to the mother that she decided to have no Christmas celebration of any kind. Last Sunday evening, as the family sat in partial darkness, recounting their loss with all its sad circumstances, a tender little voice pierced the gloom:

"Mamma, isn't there any Christmas in heaven?"  
"Yes, darling," answered the weeping mother. "It is always Christmas there."

"Then why don't you keep it here?" persisted the little girl. "Jus' make b'lieve baby isn't dead, an hang up her little stocking, mamma, an let's all have Christmas jus' de same an be happy, like she is."

The child's wisdom prevailed against the unreasoning sorrow of the mother, and the little ones are happy and busy filling the stocking of the baby who will keep Christmas in heaven.

Christmas Dessert.  
It was daylight when Loveland stopped writing. He gathered the sheets of the manuscript up, and taking them over to the open window read them by the light in the eyes of the pale dawn, who looked marveling over his shoulder.

It was one of the moments that make eternity seem worth while. The story was written. He held it in his hand, the beautiful, perfect thing that expressed, as a flower its seed, the conception that had laid a summer long in his heart. In his heart! Why, he knew it had laid waiting a million years in the heart of the universe! He looked around the dim room with the eyes of a god sitting at table in high heaven, above life and fate and time and the ignoble hungers of men.

As he turned to greet the light look of the kindling dawn Cresset dragged his tired body into the room. He dropped down on the bed, kicking off his shoes and trying to catch Loveland's glance before he spoke. At last Loveland moved about, hunting out a fresh tablet from among the ill assorted contents of his desk, but he took no notice of Cresset, and when he deliberately began copying from the crumpled manuscript the latter could stand it no longer.

"I say, Loveland!" he called out.  
Loveland looked up vaguely. "Well," he said—his hand never stopped. "What is it?"

"You've been fired, that's all," said Cresset.  
Loveland dropped his vague eyes back to his moving pencil. Cresset wondered if he had heard. He knew that these were hard and places difficult to get. He knew that a man might starve in out of the way holes while hunting a job. He knew all this, and he really thought that perhaps Loveland had not heard him, but he need not have worried. Loveland had heard all right. He had even wondered why Cresset should have bothered him with a little thing like that.—Kate Field's Washington.

Escape Easy.  
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STORY OF A STORY.

The inspiration for it left Loveland breathless at 6 o'clock of an April morning as he helped drag Dwy's body out of the river. Dwy was a man who had drowned himself because he was not clever enough to make a woman think that she loved him. Loveland knew something of them both. It was as he let go Dwy's arm that the story came into his head. He got white, and his hand shook.

"You don't like touching 'em," suggested the officer who had assisted at the useless rescue.

"What?" asked Loveland in bewilderment.

He was staring up the river into the guise of brightened him all at once, but when his companion spoke he looked down at the thing recalled to him and remembered more quickly than he had forgotten. Why, it was his touch on this man's dead arm that had set the pulses of a million Aprils beating in his brain.

Death, life—did that particular time the same? He looked up the river again into springs of all the years that had ever been lived by men—farther, farther, farther, into all of these other springs, blooming, dying, beyond the gentle memories of time. It was as if he had once been a god and a poet among gods, as he had been, as fatal as flame, as elusive as water, as beautiful as the unknissed lips of a girl. It was as if he had now come in some Protean disguise to tell of the thing he had created to the deaf and dumb and blind peoples of the world.

"Guess you'll get a pretty scoop on 'The Asteroid,'" the officer congratulated him.

Loveland started. His face got back its color. The glow sank down to gray ashes in his gray eyes as he took out his pad and began to make copy. It had just occurred to him that at this particular time on this particular planet, his role of reporter must be carried out. He would write the story when he got time. Meanwhile there was the scoop.

September came, but he had never had the time. All through the summer the story had beckoned him, all through the summer his imagination with its beauty and virility, with its exquisite strangeness, its yet more exquisite familiarity. It seemed to him that he knew each word, each paragraph, as it would look on paper. Eighteen hours after 18 hours of the daily routine his tired eyes unwarily crossed phenomenal phantasmal lines and mured words that were the souls of words, but he never found time to write the story out because of the back work which allowed him to live by bread alone.

Sometimes, indeed, on Monday morning holidays, he took thought of giving it tangible form, but he found it back and never chimed. Often, however, down at the office, when the rush was most breathless and the yell for copy most maddening, Loveland suddenly felt himself in absolute tune with the story. "If I could only write it now!" he used to say to himself at such moments. The faculty of the fiction enraged him one evening as he bent above his proofs, trying to make them out by the sweltering lights of natural gas.

It was scarcely an hour after one of these periods that he stood in his room with the mood upon him. It gripped him, it forced him. He fought it back and hurried with his dressing. There were two men to interview, he told himself. There was the city council to report, a benefit to look in at, 20 other things, but the mood did not retreat even when confronted with these facts. The rather it insisted. Even as Loveland put his hand upon the door he so he stopped short and stared out of the window. Perhaps it was morning to him and the veil of the mist was divided again. At least he did not go back to the office. Instead, he flung himself across his bed and began to write.

About 1 o'clock his roomman, Cresset, tumbled up the stairs and in at the door.

"What!" he gasped. He paled perceptibly as he half way appreciated the situation. "The boss is down there," he whispered, awestricken. "The whole gang is cussing you out. What are you doing here? I only looked in here as a last chance."

Loveland lifted himself of a sudden and rested his eyes on Cresset, twisting his pencil in his cramped fingers as he did so. Not that he knew they were cramped.

"Will you get out?" inquired Loveland evenly and impolitely. His brow was a sea aspect of severe fury under his light disordered hair; his lips took on new curves of command; a large minded indignation blazed in his eyes and voice. But Cresset was not impressed. He was not accustomed to be impressed by anything except the boss, and besides in his mind's eye he beheld an different and sweating man.

"Certainly," said he, "I will get out, and so will you."

It was daylight when Loveland stopped writing. He gathered the sheets of the manuscript up, and taking them over to the open window read them by the light in the eyes of the pale dawn, who looked marveling over his shoulder.

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THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CAROL, as Milton and Jeremy Taylor have said, was sung by the angels on the plains of Bethlehem. This custom has prevailed in most Christian countries and is perpetuated in England and on the continent. Calabrian minstrels still leave their mountains during the last days preceding Christmas for Naples or Rome, saluting with their wild music the shrines of the Virgin Mother, to cheer her until the birth hour of the infant Jesus, now near at hand. The first Christmas carols were hymns in honor of the nativity. They afterward assumed a more secular character, many of them being songs of revelry accompanying the festivities of the season.

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The first Christmas carol, as Milton and Jeremy Taylor have said, was sung by the angels on the plains of Bethlehem. This custom has prevailed in most Christian countries and is perpetuated in England and on the continent. Calabrian minstrels still leave their mountains during the last days preceding Christmas for Naples or Rome, saluting with their wild music the shrines of the Virgin Mother, to cheer her until the birth hour of the infant Jesus, now near at hand. The first Christmas carols were hymns in honor of the nativity. They afterward assumed a more secular character, many of them being songs of revelry accompanying the festivities of the season.

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